

**Mallee Track Health &
Community Service**

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MEDIA RELEASE

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VISITING RETURNS TO OUYEN AGED CARE AND PATTINSON HOUSE

A TEMPORARY hold on visitors at Mallee Track Health and Community Service (MTHCS) Ouyen facilities, has been lifted.

Visits were suspended at Ouyen Aged Care and Pattinson House late last week due to a COVID-19 exposure, but both facilities reopened for visitors on Monday (January 24) 2022 under strict protocols, including a requirement for visitors to phone ahead.

MTHCS Community and Social Support Manager Nadiene Lynch said the prompt and responsible actions of staff and the support of the State Public Health Unit allowed the safe reopening of both sites.

"As always, our success depends a lot on the level of support we receive from staff and the community – and a huge thank you to families, residents, staff and our broader community for their understanding," Ms Lynch said.

"It is always the last option to close the facilities to visitors, but the health and safety of residents must come first," she said.

"As we have found now at both Sea Lake and Ouyen facilities, short, sharp snap-lockdowns such as these are the expected response and can successfully prevent a COVID-19 exposure becoming a transmission event which impacts on residents and staff at MTHCS."

Ms Lynch said the experiences and incident management at both Ouyen and Sea Lake facilities during January may become the "new normal", for a while.

"MTHCS is adhering strictly to all COVID-safe protocols and current Government advice, with the aim of protecting our community's most vulnerable people," Ms Lynch said.

"100 per cent of our residents have received their booster shots and a large percentage of our staff have also, which goes a long way toward ensuring the safety of all of us, but particularly our residents."

For interviews or further information contact MTHCS CEO Lois O'Callaghan (03) 5092 1111

But Ms Lynch said the rising impact of the Omicron variant in throughout the Mallee meant the ongoing support of the community was essential.

“We’ve put in place the key protections, but the wider community has a really important role to play in this too – and ensuring that we have all received our COVID booster is an important first step,” she said.

“We all have a role to play in protecting our families and each other. Our Mallee communities have done so well right through this pandemic – protecting our own families and our vulnerable community members.

“The collective community response has been the key to our safety right through this pandemic – and never more so than now, given the extreme transmissibility of Omicron.”

MTHCS Executive Director of Nursing Pam Vallance said community members eligible for the booster shot should take the opportunity as soon as possible.

“We have started our childhood vaccination campaigns, and we are rolling out booster shots as supply and resources allow. That will continue. Please call our medical clinic to check availability for a vaccine booking.

“But the message is – don’t wait for us. If you’re eligible and you are able to receive your booster at a pharmacy or at a State-run clinic don’t hesitate,” she said.

“That’s the important first step to being part of the solution – but also social distancing and wearing mask properly whenever you are indoors away from home, and being vigilant with hand hygiene all the time.”

Ms Vallance said MTHCS is “well versed and prepared” to face this challenging time head-on, having recently overcome a similar scenario in Sea Lake.

“This may be what the ‘new normal’ looks like for a while in healthcare provision. Over Christmas and New Year we were successful in overcoming a similar challenge at Sea Lake – and we have the hard work of our staff, and the help of the community to thank for that,” Ms Vallance said.

“Our staff are doing everything possible to ensure our residents are supported and stimulated and they’re in good spirits during this challenging time,” Ms Vallance said.

My Lynch said the exposures at Sea Lake and Ouyen during January showed what could be achieved with a collective community response.

“Families, carers and visitors are such key factor in the wellbeing of residents, and lockdowns are a last resort,” Ms Lynch said.

“But where we have all worked together, community members, staff, residents and families, we have the absolute best chance of keeping our vulnerable residents safe.

“It can be done, and it can be done very successfully, with teamwork, and we thank everyone for their continued understanding and support.”

Ends.

Pictured: MTHCS Director of Nursing Pam Vallance, Community and Social Support Manager Nadiene Lynch and Director of Community Services Lyndal Munro

